

Sustainable Mobility and Real Estate

Opportunities for Creating Lasting Development Value

Cover photo: The Miami MetroMover in downtown Miami. (Shutterstock)

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About

Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 48,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 84 countries.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

ULI Randall Lewis Center for Sustainability in Real Estate

The ULI Randall Lewis Center for Sustainability in Real Estate envisions a net zero, resilient, healthy, and inclusive world where every person, community, and business thrives. To achieve this vision, the Center accelerates action for sustainability in real estate and cities by cultivating leadership and knowledge, catalyzing adoption of sustainability practices across the real estate value chain, helping solve land use and real estate challenges, and advancing policy solutions. The Center pursues these goals through its four main programs—Decarbonization, Urban Resilience, Healthy Places, and ULI Greenprint—working closely with ULI members and partners to produce publications on cutting-edge issues, host global convenings, provide community technical assistance, and organize leadership networks.

Discover transformative practices for real estate and land use at uli.org/sustainability. Connect with the Lewis Center at sustainability@uli.org.

ModeScore

ModeScore is a global certification organization that helps real estate owners, developers, and investors evaluate how well their buildings support sustainable transportation. ModeScore provides a data-driven framework for assessing buildings based on their access to public transport, walkability, cycling infrastructure, and other environmentally friendly mobility options. Visit their website for more information at <https://modescore.com>.

This Report

This report is a practical resource for real estate professionals, investors, and planners seeking to understand and apply best practices for integrating sustainable transportation into commercial real estate development. Drawing from current projects, industry insights, and emerging trends, this report highlights strategies for responding to market demand and creating long-term value for communities.

This report showcases how developers are aligning with public investment in transit and active transportation infrastructure, incorporating building-scale features that promote mobility, and navigating the financial and policy considerations tied to transit-oriented development (TOD). Content in this report specifically focuses on development in commercial real estate (CRE)—including office, multifamily, and retail properties—within the context of the United States. A companion report that focuses on context from the United Kingdom and broader Europe will be released in the future.

A portion of this report is a reflection on key takeaways from the [“Promoting Sustainable Transportation in Commercial Real Estate”](#) workshop held from June 9–10, 2025, in Miami, Florida. The workshop was hosted by ULI, with support from [ModeScore](#).

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Introduction

There is a growing recognition of the environmental, economic, and social benefits of sustainable transportation modes including walking, bicycling, and transit in urban areas. This recognition is reshaping how real estate developers approach site planning and building design.

Demand is rising for walkable, bikeable, and transit-connected communities, and transportation emissions associated with buildings are increasingly tracked and disclosed. With this reality, developers and building owners in CRE have a powerful opportunity to leverage sustainable transportation investments to support project success, meet environmental targets, and expand mobility for residents and workers alike.

The United Nations High-Level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport defines sustainable transportation as “The provision of services and infrastructure for the mobility of people and goods—advancing economic and social development to benefit today’s and future generations in a manner that is safe, affordable, accessible, efficient, and resilient, while minimizing carbon and other emissions and environmental impacts.”

This definition encompasses a range of options, including public transit, active transportation (walking, biking, wheeling), and other micromobility modes. It also highlights how transportation systems influence community development, with the potential to encourage compact, mixed-use development patterns and influence real estate decisions to support accessibility, resilience, and lower carbon emissions.

The intersection of sustainable transportation and real estate is becoming more pronounced in cities around the world as developers recognize the advantages of integrating their projects with sustainable transportation infrastructure. A critical part of this equation lies in addressing Scope 3 emissions, which are indirect greenhouse gases generated outside of a development’s direct operations but within their value chain (see figure 1). This includes the emissions tied to how tenants, visitors, and workers travel to and from a property. This also includes delivery and pick-up vehicles that are an increasingly large percentage of a building’s Scope 3 emissions.

Businesses across sectors are increasingly being held accountable for these emissions through evolving regulations, consumer demand, and investor expectations. This shift reflects a growing recognition that Scope 3 emissions typically make up the largest share of a company’s overall carbon footprint, and that failing to address them poses both reputational and financial risks. For developers, this means that designing projects to prioritize access to low-carbon transportation options such as transit, cycling, and walking not only reduces downstream transportation-related emissions but also strengthens compliance, investor confidence, and long-term resilience.

WHAT ARE SCOPE 1, 2, AND 3 EMISSIONS?

Scope	Definition	Example
Scope 1	Direct greenhouse gas emissions from sources owned or controlled by the organization	Emissions from burning natural gas in a building’s boiler or furnace for heating
Scope 2	Indirect greenhouse gas emissions, such as through an organization’s purchase of electricity, steam, heat, or cooling	Emissions from electricity purchased from the grid to power lighting, elevators, or air conditioning in a building
Scope 3	Includes all indirect emissions across a company’s value chain: upstream from activities such as commuting and transport, and downstream from activities such as product use and disposal	Emissions from the production and transportation of building materials (such as steel or concrete), waste disposal, and employees commuting to work

Figure 1: Definitions and examples of Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions. (ULI)

By leveraging sustainable transportation infrastructure focused on walking, cycling, micromobility, and public transit use, real estate developers can help increase community well-being while potentially seeing a greater return on investment.

Demand for Sustainable Transportation

The market demand for more livable and sustainable communities is growing each year. A [2020 poll from Smart Growth America](#) showed around 66 percent of Americans believe that their communities would be improved by investing in more public transit.

Similar polling in 2023 from [the National Association of Realtors](#) found that 79 percent of Americans value living in a place where they can easily walk to other places and amenities. In the multifamily development context, there is [industry evidence](#) that more properties are installing bike-friendly amenities—a key factor that can [attract renters](#). For office properties, the percentage of workers who commute via active transportation or public transit has increased in recent years [according to census data](#).

This demand has extended to the [building scale as well](#)—with many development professionals citing increasing public awareness of sustainability as an incentive for environmentally friendly amenities in buildings. This demand is coupled with increasing [regulatory standards for reporting emissions](#)—further impacting investor confidence in developments that do not prioritize sustainability.

This presents a clear business imperative for developers to include sustainable amenities such as bicycle parking, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and more in their projects, and partner with public entities to integrate building operations with sustainable transportation infrastructure.

Integrating access to sustainable transportation systems within real estate is more than just convenience—it's also about CRE playing a role in helping to create cohesive, interconnected communities where mobility is seamless and inclusive. To achieve these ends, it is vital that public policy and private investment at the building scale intersect to bring about the best possible results.

ModeScore, a global certification organization that helps real estate owners, developers, and investors evaluate how well their buildings

support sustainable transportation, describes the variety of ways that people and goods arrive to and from a building as “pillars” that collectively work to enhance overall mobility (see figure 2).

Reimagining mobility in this way and exploring the best practices detailed in this report can help create places where sustainable transportation infrastructure and private development are seamlessly connected—resulting in a built environment that actively supports and encourages sustainable travel.

Momentum for Active and Sustainable Transportation

Although the vast majority of transportation spending still goes to road infrastructure, there is growing momentum for increased public, private, and philanthropic investments in active and sustainable transportation infrastructure. Notably, [a 2023 poll from Transportation for America](#) found that 70 percent of respondents agreed with the statement “providing people with more transportation options is better for our health, safety, and economy than building more highways.” This public sentiment creates an opportunity for public and private sector leaders.

Investment in bike-friendly infrastructure assets such as trails and protected bike lanes, public parks, and public transit create opportunities for complementary amenities and connections provided by private developers and building owners and operators.

Private actors can help activate spaces around sustainable transportation infrastructure through investments in transit station areas, public plazas, and more. Building owners and operators can support active transportation policies and tenant demand through offering amenities and facilities, as described below. Through these partnerships, private developers have an opportunity to incorporate in-demand building features and practices that support sustainable transportation networks and civic investments—all while increasing value and achieving sustainability goals.



Sustainable Transport Pillars, as defined by ModeScore



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

20%

- PROXIMITY
- VARIETY
- QUALITY
- FUTURE PROOFING
- INFORMATION, PROMOTION & SERVICES
- BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE
- INNOVATION



PRIVATE VEHICLES

25%

- QUANTITY
- ELECTRIFICATION
- ACCESSIBILITY
- SECURITY
- MANAGEMENT
- CAR-SHARING
- FUTURE PROOFING
- INFORMATION, PROMOTION & SERVICES



ACTIVE TRAVEL

35%

- PROXIMITY & QUALITY OF PEDESTRIAN ROUTES
- PROXIMITY & QUALITY OF ACTIVE TRAVEL ROUTES
- VEHICLE-FREE ZONES
- ACCESSIBILITY
- ACTIVE TRAVEL SHARING AVAILABILITY & QUALITY
- ON-SITE ACTIVE TRAVEL FACILITIES
- INNOVATION



SITE-WIDE MOBILITY

20%

- ELECTRIC DELIVERIES
- PEDAL DELIVERIES
- DELIVERY QUALITY
- PERFORMANCE
- INNOVATION



ACCESSIBILITY IS INCORPORATED INTO EACH PILLAR

Active and Sustainable Transportation Amenities in CRE

A variety of building scale investments can help maximize the use of sustainable transportation modes as well—creating value for developers, improving mobility for residents, and strengthening communities. These strategies include both design choices and building-level policies.

Cycling, Walking/Running, Micromobility

Bicycle Storage

Providing automobile parking has long been a standard practice for developers, shaped by zoning codes and conventional development expectations. Today, developers also have the opportunity to meet growing demand for active transportation infrastructure—either alongside or in place of automobile parking.

Although [bicycle parking requirements](#) for new developments are becoming more common across the United States, they remain inconsistent nationwide. This trend is mirrored in Europe as well, with many European Union nations advancing [standards for bicycle parking at the building scale](#).

Developers and building owners adjacent to public trails and bicycle lanes can unlock the potential of this infrastructure by including bicycle storage rooms in new developments and building retrofits. According to ModeScore, the design of bicycle storage rooms is equally important to the quantity of parking spaces provided. Key design elements to consider for bicycle storage rooms include the following:

- Making them large enough to accommodate a sizable percentage of building occupants,
- Ensuring they are well lit and equipped with security measures to ensure comfort and safety of users,

- Designing them in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and well ventilated to ensure accessibility for all, and
- Equipping them with charging ports to accommodate electric micromobility devices.

For office real estate: Previously, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA) provided tax-free bicycle commuting benefits—allowing employers to write off \$20 monthly reimbursement to employees who bike to work. As of 2025, these benefits have been eliminated due to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

On-Site Showers and Changing Rooms

To further incentivize the use of active transportation infrastructure, office developers and building owners can install shower and changing rooms in their buildings.

[Hot weather can be a large barrier](#) to entry for people using active transportation, so building features (particularly in warmer areas) can increase people's comfort by providing facilities that allow them to freshen up after a commute. There is evidence that [cyclist commuting increases](#) when amenities like showers are added, so developers can encourage greater use of adjacent active transportation infrastructure with this simple design choice.

These shower and changing room facilities can attract more use by following accessibility standards and integrating features such as hair dryers, vanity units, and ironing stations. These features serve to ensure that active travel is an accessible and attractive option for all.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “the range of measures that use plant or soil systems, permeable pavement or other permeable surfaces or substrates, stormwater harvest and reuse, or landscaping to store, infiltrate, or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to sewer systems or to surface waters.”

Like shower and changing facilities, robust green infrastructure around buildings has the potential to improve the quality of trips people take via active transportation modes—further expanding the potential for project success by leveraging adjacent sustainable transportation infrastructure.

Buildings furnished with trees can provide shade for residents while making the location more attractive. Additionally, projects can include open spaces that are shaded by trees and use evaporative or reflective pavements to reduce urban heat effects. These amenities can help better connect private projects to nearby active transportation infrastructure by using building design to encourage outdoor activity and movement.

In addition, private developers have the opportunity to invest directly in active transportation infrastructure by funding improvements to existing trails or creating new ones. This is an option that goes beyond the building scale but has significant positive impacts on community well-being and use of active transportation.

Public Transit

Real-Time Transit Information (RTI) Screens

The availability and quality of public transit can dramatically affect community mobility and overall well-being. High quality public transit can boost economic activity, community happiness, and return on investment for developers.

Given this, buildings leveraging public transit infrastructure can invest in RTI screens to show up-to-date information about the proximity of major transit lines—as seen in projects such as [Casa Arabella in Oakland, California](#).

Research shows that [RTI can reduce wait times and feelings of anxiety](#) for transit users. Greater knowledge of transit wait times has the potential to increase use of public transit—potentially contributing to the case for greater funding for this infrastructure and providing adjacent development opportunities. RTI screens can also be a signal of a building’s dedication to sustainability—a potential selling point for prospective tenants and buyers.

Transit Passes

Residential developments and building owners can incentivize use of adjacent public transit through providing transit passes to tenants. These may be provided for all residents or for those without personal automobiles.

Developers who plan to offer transit passes to residents to attract car-free households may be able to build less parking, depending on local regulations and investor requirements. This can reduce development costs, improve project profitability, and create opportunities to invest in other features that further support sustainable transportation.

For office real estate: Since the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in 2017, employers are not able to deduct the expenses of qualified transportation fringe benefits such as transit passes. However, the 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill retains employees' ability to use pre-tax dollars on these benefits.

Private Vehicles

Parking Incentives

Because local regulations and financing may depend on providing a certain amount of automobile parking, many developers face pressure to maintain conventional parking levels, regardless of local demand or the proximity of sustainable transportation alternatives.

There is evidence that onerous [parking minimums may be hindering housing development](#), so there has been a push to [reduce the burden of these standards across the United States](#). There is additional evidence showing a [decline in car ownership and driving rates among younger people](#), heavily influenced by the [rising costs associated with cars](#). If this trend continues, it may contribute to reduced parking standards in the future.

Developers can look at examples such as the [Link at Douglas](#) to see successful projects with below-market parking ratios. Projects like Link can charge higher parking fees for residents who have multiple cars and provide financial benefits for car-free residents—such as rent reductions and transit passes. Developers can also include dedicated parking spaces for car-share vehicles in their projects—a strategy linked with a [reduction in resident vehicle ownership rates](#). There is potential for these practices to become more common as sustainable transportation trends advance.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations

Alongside increasing bicycle parking standards, a growing number of regulations now require [new developments to accommodate EVs](#). Without charging infrastructure, developers risk losing tenants as EV ownership becomes [increasingly common](#).

Developers and building owners have an opportunity to include charging infrastructure in buildings, thus incentivizing sustainable transportation options. This practice can work in tandem with increasing government investment in publicly available charging stations to shift public habits.

Considerations for Tenants, Owners, and Developers

Sustainable transportation amenities in CRE are shaped by the distinct roles of developers, owners, and tenants. Developers make critical upfront choices like property acquisition along established transit routes, whether to include bicycle storage, EV charging stations, or reduced parking ratios. These choices set the foundation for long-term outcomes, but building owners and operators take responsibility for maintaining these amenities.

In office settings, employer tenants control key policies that influence travel behavior, including whether to provide subsidized transit passes or other commuting benefits. This division of responsibilities can create split incentive challenges—so that even if buildings are designed with the features described above, their impact can be limited if tenants do not actively support their use. [Green leases](#) are one tool to help close this gap by outlining shared commitments and cost allocations for sustainability features. For example, they can specify how expenses for maintaining bike storage or mobility infrastructure are distributed or establish expectations for tenant engagement in offering commuting benefits.

By addressing these dynamics directly, owners and tenants can maximize the value of sustainable transportation investments and ensure that building-level features are fully utilized. This allows all parties to share the environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Project Profiles

This section highlights a set of real estate projects that demonstrate how sustainable transportation infrastructure can be leveraged to enhance development outcomes. Each example was presented during the Miami workshop to showcase practical strategies for integrating active and public transportation into building and community design.

Together, these profiles illustrate how developers and their partners are responding to market demand for walkable and transit-connected environments, aligning private investment with public infrastructure, and creating long-term value through sustainable design choices.

The Underline (Miami, Florida)

The Underline is a key example of a sustainable transportation infrastructure project leading to increased opportunities for nearby CRE buildings. The Underline is a project funded by public and private dollars that is transforming the land below Miami's elevated Metrorail transit system into a 10-mile (16 km) linear park, urban trail, and art destination. The project is turning underutilized land into a vibrant, multimodal corridor that connects communities, supports active transportation, and enhances access to transit.

The park is designed to encourage active transportation and community gatherings in the shade underneath the Metrorail, all while positively impacting the environment through use of native plants and sustainable materials.



The Underline linear park is shown underneath the Miami Metrorail. (2022 Sam Oberter)

“In short, the mission of the Underline is to reclaim, rewild, and restore,” according to Patrice Gillespie-Smith, COO and president of Friends of The Underline.

Currently, there are 2.5 miles (4 km) of The Underline constructed, but the impact has already been profound. The park attracts over 2 million annual visitors who exercise, gather for community events, and/or patronize a business.

Since the first phase of The Underline was constructed in 2021, 18 new businesses have started in or around the park—contributing to the \$50 million in annual economic impact the park has generated and over \$3 billion in new taxable value it will generate going forward.

Properties near The Underline have been able to leverage this public investment and change their operations. For example, Link at Douglas ([see profile](#)) boasts a lower parking ratio than typical multifamily properties in Miami due to the proximity to The Underline. With only 0.5 parking spaces per unit, the development is able to use the cost

and space savings of not building as much parking and apply it toward other space- and cost-efficient amenities (e.g., financial benefits for car-free residents, better-designed space near the building). This is a clear example of CRE leveraging public investments in sustainable transportation to boost value through cost savings and reinvestments in sustainable features and practices.

“The Underline is demonstrating the economic impact that beautiful, inviting, and connected open spaces can have on adjacent real estate. We have taken what was once an eyesore and created residential amenities, so that properties now advertise that they are on The Underline as a selling point. By optimizing their location near these natural assets, property owners can leverage the value of their proximity in sustainable interventions without having to build it themselves,” according to Gillespie-Smith.

[Learn more about The Underline and future plans for the park.](#)



Community gathering spaces in the Underline linear park. (Shutterstock)

Link at Douglas, Miami, Florida

Link at Douglas is a mixed-use development in Miami that opened its first phase in 2023. Located adjacent to the Douglas Road Metrorail station and along The Underline, a linear park and active transportation corridor, the project encourages car-free living and leverages regional transit connectivity to support residential and retail uses.

At completion, the project will comprise a total of 1,603 residential units and 30,000 square feet (2,800 sq m) of retail. The site was previously used for parking for the Metrorail station, which has since been incorporated into the project. A major goal of the development is creating housing and density along the Miami Metro and the future extension of The Underline.

Context for Development

Link at Douglas is being developed through a public/private partnership between Miami-Dade County as the landlord and 13th Floor Investments, a Florida-based investment and development firm. The Adler Group is the co-general partner and Barings/Mass Mutual is the development capital partner.

The project is transforming a transit-accessible site into a high-density, transit-oriented community.

As of 2024, Link includes

- Over 700 residential units across two towers, Cascade and Core
- 30,000 square feet (2,800 sq m) of retail space
- 25,000 square feet (2,300 sq m) of public open space
- \$17 million in public improvements, including renovations to the Douglas Road Metrorail station and a new public plaza



The Link at Douglas development sits next to the Miami Underline. (13th Floor Investments)

The second phase broke ground in 2Q 2025 and is scheduled to complete in 33 months.

Aaron Stolear, president of development at 13th Floor Investments, notes that “The development self-selects for car-free people,” referring to the site’s deliberate design choices that encourage active and public transportation.

Sustainable Transportation–Friendly Features

The project's location at the intersection of rail transit and The Underline provides a unique opportunity to encourage sustainable mobility. Key design and policy features include the following:

- **Reduced parking ratio:** Link at Douglas's first building, Core, provides just 0.5 parking spaces per unit, significantly below standard requirements (typically 1.5 per principal dwelling unit in Miami and closer to 1.0 in the area around Link)—signaling that the development is designed to support alternative, more sustainable modes of travel.
- **Incentives for car-free living:** Residents without cars receive rental incentives, while those who require parking pay monthly fees, further encouraging alternative transportation choices.
- **Transit and trail integration:** The development benefits from direct access to both the Douglas Road Metrorail station and The Underline, supporting walking, biking, and transit use.
- **Public space investment:** Enhancements to the station and adjacent plaza improve the pedestrian experience and support community activity. This investment further integrates the development with public space.

Development Lessons

Link at Douglas demonstrates how transit-oriented development, parking reform, and public infrastructure investment can work in concert to create a real estate project that fully leverages sustainable transportation options.

The partnership between 13th Floor Investments and Miami-Dade County demonstrates how mixed-use development near transit can support mobility, livability, and climate goals simultaneously. When discussing 13th Floor Investments' decision to develop near The Underline, Stolear said, "Our decision to develop Link at Douglas beside the Underline and the Douglas Metrorail station reflects our commitment to transit-oriented communities. The relationship is reciprocal: the Underline and Metrorail provide the mobility, green space, and accessibility that make Link thrive. And on the other side, Link brings residents, businesses, and daily activity that ensure these public investments reach their full potential."

The project's early success—100 percent lease-up of the Core tower within four months, and 25 percent lease-up of Cascade within 45 days—reflects strong demand for transit-accessible, active transportation-oriented housing in Miami.

As The Underline continues to expand, Link at Douglas is poised to offer even more opportunities for residents to live car-free and actively connected to the region.

MiLine Miami, Miami, Florida

MiLine Miami is a mixed-use development that leverages and incorporates nearby active transportation infrastructure. MiLine launched its first phase in 2022 next to the Ludlam Trail—a former rail line in west Miami-Dade County that is being converted to a six-mile (9.7 km) linear park for public use.

The project promotes the use of the trail and leverages access to it to activate residential and retail development. When complete, there will be nearly 1,000 residential apartments and over 20,000 square feet (1,858 sq m) of retail space.

Context for Development

MiLine Miami is being developed primarily by ZOM Living, an Orlando-based housing development firm that operates in Florida and across the United States. ZOM Living used tax credits available to developers working on brownfields to develop MiLine Miami and lead construction on a portion of the Ludlam trail. In total, ZOM Living will invest over \$3 million in trail development.

By creating a dense, mixed-used development and investing in improvements to the Ludlam Trail, MiLine Miami is fostering an entire community based around sustainable transportation infrastructure.

As of 2025, with Phase I complete, MiLine includes

- Over 300 residential units
- 4,600 square feet (427 sq m) of retail space
- 1,300 feet (396 m) of Ludlam Trail constructed

The second and third phases of construction are scheduled to include over 600 additional residential units and over 18,000 square feet (1,672 sq m) of retail. The second phase of construction is anticipated to break ground by the end of 2025, with the third phase anticipated in 2028.

Sustainable Transportation–Friendly Features

MiLine Miami's location adjacent to the Ludlam Trail enables the implementation of sustainable features that activate the community. Key design and policy features include the following:

- **Public space investment:** ZOM Living dedicated funding to construct Ludlam Trail—making the greenspace available for residents and tenants of MiLine as well as outside visitors looking to enjoy the trail.
- **Trail integration:** MiLine's proximity to the Ludlam trail and inclusion of an active transportation path throughout the development supports walking and biking. Use of the active transportation path in the development is incentivized through outdoor amenities such as residential plazas and outdoor seating at retail spots.
- **Bicycle parking:** Residents of MiLine Miami are encouraged to use bicycles (and other micromobility devices), as there are over 70 secure garage parking spaces available for a low rate of \$15 a month—in contrast with \$50 a month for car parking (\$100 for a second car).

Development Lessons

MiLine Miami demonstrates how private development can play a large role in placemaking around sustainable transportation infrastructure. The availability of tax credits for redeveloping around former brownfields was crucial in ZOM Living spearheading this project.



The MiLine Miami walk/bike path weaves through the development. (Harvey Smith Photography)

The project combines proactive public policy with private sector innovation to create a community centered on sustainable, active transportation. A key goal is to demonstrate how walkability can serve as the foundation for successful, future-proof development.

As Nico Otheguy, senior development manager at ZOM Living, said during the Miami workshop, “There is market demand for walkability.

Development that visibly meets this market demand can result in broader victories like reduced parking minimums—which can lead to higher yield and more development.”

As MiLine is fully constructed, there is potential for the development to further leverage sustainable transportation infrastructure and support transportation mode shifts in Miami.

PENN DISTRICT, New York, New York

The PENN DISTRICT is a mixed-use redevelopment project centered around Penn Station in Midtown Manhattan—the biggest transportation hub in the western hemisphere based on volume of daily passengers. The large-scale project is reshaping a critical but aging section of New York City into a modern, sustainable, and transit-oriented commercial and cultural destination.

Central to the redevelopment are significant investments in new public plazas, expanded pedestrian space, and improved streetscapes—enhancing the public realm and strengthening connections to sustainable transportation.

Once complete, the nearly 10 million square feet (929,000 sq m) of revitalized space will create a more welcoming, walkable environment that supports both economic activity and climate-friendly mobility.

Context for Development

The PENN DISTRICT is being spearheaded by Vornado Realty Trust, a leading Manhattan-based real estate investment trust with nearly \$19 billion in total enterprise value and a long-standing focus on revitalizing urban areas.

The PENN DISTRICT is anchored by Penn Station, which serves over 600,000 riders daily and approximately 10 percent of New York City's workforce.

Vornado's phased redevelopment strategy is focused on creating a community atmosphere around Penn Station by activating the real estate around the area and maximizing foot traffic.

Work done for the PENN DISTRICT currently includes

- Significant upgrades to public space through the creation of Plaza33—a pedestrianized space equipped with greenery, seating, and space for community events
- Improvements to 5.5 million square feet (511,000 sq m) of modern office space—notably in the PENN 1 and PENN 2 buildings, and the Farley Building

Sustainable Transportation–Friendly Features

The PENN DISTRICT leverages its unique position within New York's transportation network to implement sustainable, mobility-first design.

- **Transit integration:** Penn Station connects with Amtrak, NJ Transit, Long Island Railroad, 14 MTA subway lines, PATH, and regional buses—offering the best multimodal access of any area in the country. Vornado's redevelopment enhances this integration by investing in street-level improvements including new and identifiable transit entrances and accessibility.
- **Public space investments:** Plaza33—an outdoor public plaza with newly planted trees, umbrellas for shade, movable chairs and tables, additional concessions, and reimagined ground floor retail—and other pedestrianized areas along 7th Avenue create space for walking, gathering, and relaxation. These design elements, combined with in-building and on-street bike infrastructure in the area, support broader connectivity and reduce car dependency in the district.
- **Green building features:** Vornado has committed to sustainable building design, with LEED Gold minimums for all new commercial development. For the PENN DISTRICT, PENN 2 includes a rooftop park and terraces to encourage integration with outdoor space. PENN 1 features a plaza that integrates with public space and further encourages interaction with the surrounding community on foot.



Pedestrians walk in Plaza33 in the PENN DISTRICT. (Vornado Realty Trust)

Development Lessons

The PENN DISTRICT demonstrates the outsized impact that private-sector leadership can have in revitalizing major transit hubs and fostering TOD. By making the area outside of Penn Station a true destination, the PENN DISTRICT has fundamentally transformed how people interact with the space above- and below-ground. The scale and ambition of the project is a model for investment in walkable, sustainable, and economically resilient neighborhoods.

The project also reveals the importance of aligning public and private goals. Vornado's coordination with the public sector has led to infrastructure upgrades that improve commuter experience and real estate improvements that may increase community interaction with the space.

Vornado has secured future entitlements to build up to an additional 10 million square feet of office, residential, and mixed use on its sites that connect to the Penn Station transit infrastructure through the Penn Station Area Civic and Land Use General Project Plan. These entitlements will maximize the utility of the dense transit infrastructure but are dependent upon market conditions for implementation timing.

This collaboration between private development and public infrastructure investment benefits tenants, workers, and the broader public.

Key Workshop Takeaways

ULI and ModeScore hosted the [“Promoting Sustainable Transportation in Commercial Real Estate”](#) workshop from June 9–10, 2025, in Miami. Thirty-eight leaders in real estate, planning, and public-sector transportation gathered to discuss best practices for development that supports and benefits from sustainable transportation investments. ULI is grateful to ModeScore for their generous support of this workshop.



James Nash addresses the Miami workshop audience. (Jeremy Sanford)



Patrice Gillespie-Smith addresses Miami workshop attendees during a tour of The Underline in Miami. (Jeremy Sanford)



Speakers at the Miami workshop address the audience. (Jeremy Sanford)



Patrice Gillespie-Smith guides a tour of The Underline in Miami. (Jeremy Sanford)

The workshop featured a tour of The Underline, keynote presentations, panel sessions, and collaborative group discussions. These activities informed the following key workshop takeaways.

1. There Is Momentum for Real Estate to Leverage Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure

Participants at the Miami workshop cited growing demand for mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods, as well as buildings with sustainable features.

There is a growing recognition of the benefits that can be seen when private development is integrated with sustainable transportation infrastructure. Research has shown [evidence of demand for walkable urban real estate exceeding supply](#) and [evidence of positive outcomes for developments near active transportation improvements](#).

Projects that follow the best practices highlighted in this report—such as investing in public space, providing incentives for car-free living, and integrating design with public infrastructure—can succeed in various contexts, especially when supported by enabling public policies.

2. Partnerships Are Essential for Success

Maximizing the impact of sustainable transportation infrastructure requires close collaboration among developers, public agencies, transit providers, nongovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders.

Building trust and looking for opportunities to streamline processes, especially around permitting, zoning, and construction, are critical to keeping projects on track. Delays in public-sector approvals can result in lost time and cost overruns that threaten a project's financial viability.

Workshop panelists emphasized that advocacy and strategic partnerships are essential to navigating these complexities and advancing successful development. Patrice Gillespie-Smith highlighted

how coordinated advocacy from both public and private partners helped deepen community engagement around The Underline.

On the private side, developers can benefit from cultivating proactive relationships with local planning boards, metropolitan planning organizations, transit agencies, and civic groups. These partnerships help align infrastructure investments with development goals, clarify regulatory requirements, and surface community priorities that may not be obvious from market data alone.

As Judy Kessler, principal at Vornado Realty Trust, put it: “The politics are always changing. A big part of getting this work done is engaging with local politicians, state representatives, and community boards to get their buy-in.”

3. Financial Incentives Can Be a Key Tool to Support Transit Use and TOD

Workshop panelists and participants noted the potential of financial incentives for developers and residents to encourage TOD and increased use of sustainable transportation.

On the resident side, incentives such as free shuttles, transit fare subsidies, and rent discounts for residents who don’t require a parking space can all help encourage use of transit and support development success by attracting residents seeking car-free or car-light lifestyles.

For development projects, multiple speakers highlighted the importance of various public sector actions that can incentivize TOD—including zoning overlays, density bonuses, and tax credits for land rehabilitation.

Land Use Policies and Incentives

- **Zoning overlays** are a critical planning tool that can help direct development toward sustainable transportation infrastructure. By applying tailored regulations in areas near transit, overlays can support mixed-use development, encourage walkability, and reduce car dependence. For developers, they offer guidance on building more-connected projects that align with local sustainability goals.
- **Parking policies** and requirements shape a building’s overall transportation amenity mix. Flexibility to swap bike parking for vehicle parking or right-size the amount of parking provided to market and tenant demand provides resources that developers can invest in other building amenities, including those that support active commuting and travel.
- **Density bonuses** give developers the opportunity to build more (height, floor area, or total units) in exchange for providing public benefits such as open space, affordable housing, or transit improvements. When used near transit corridors, density bonuses help create compact, vibrant communities where more people can live and work without needing a car.
- **Tax credits for land rehabilitation** can play a major role in activating sustainable transportation infrastructure. By making it financially viable to redevelop formerly contaminated or underused land, these credits can help developers bring new life to walkable, transit-adjacent areas. Tax credits are especially beneficial when paired with active transportation investments such as trails or new transit stops.

4. Parking Regulations Shape Development

Participants emphasized the need for flexibility in determining how much automobile parking to include in new projects, especially near transit and trails. They noted that policies such as minimum parking requirements often drive these decisions, and that when cities eliminate such mandates (which data from the [Parking Reform Network](#) shows is increasingly happening), developers have more freedom to explore alternatives. These alternatives (which include limited, no, or shared parking) can better support TOD and encourage active transportation.

[ULI research](#) shows how expensive parking spaces can be for developers (typically ranging from 10 to 18 percent of project costs), while also showing the projected decrease in parking demand in the coming years. This is a clear financial case for reduced parking minimums—a case that the public sector may use to reduce parking minimums and encourage TOD.

The role and structure of development financing is a key factor at the building scale. Aaron Stolear, president of development at 13th Floor Investments, highlighted the relatively low number of parking spaces in some of the firm's properties, which sparked a broader discussion about the challenges of securing financing for developments with limited parking.

He explained that 13th Floor's in-house risk capital fund has been key to advancing TOD projects that traditional banks might otherwise be reluctant to support.

Leadership on this issue from the public sector may help assuage concerns from investors and help developers interested in TOD—especially for smaller developers who may not have abundant institutional resources.

5. Design Decisions Can Drive Behavior Change

In addition to upstream and downstream incentives, workshop participants discussed how key design choices in development projects can both encourage the use of sustainable transportation and, in turn, benefit from the improved connectivity, foot traffic, and livability these modes support—creating a reinforcing cycle of project viability and neighborhood vitality.

Features such as bike storage, EV charging stations, public showers, real-time transit screens in lobbies, and shaded walkways can greatly improve first/last mile access and enhance livability.

In addition, participants highlighted design decisions that seamlessly connect private space with the public realm—such as those seen in projects near The Underline and Ludlam Trail in Miami—which help create more inviting, connected, and multimodal environments.

6. Perceptions of Sustainable Travel Modes Matter

Travel modes must be attractive, safe, and well-branded to encourage use and facilitate sustainable transportation in development. For transit specifically, features like wayfinding signage, security improvements, and aesthetically pleasing station design were encouraged by workshop participants to influence comfort.

Across multiple small-group discussions, concerns about women's safety emerged as a recurring barrier to transit and bike facility usage. Basement bike parking and poorly lit walkways were noted as potentially problematic.

To address these concerns, developers and planners can apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, improve lighting to ensure visibility, and consider above-ground, accessible storage areas for bicycles and other non-car transportation vehicles.

These design choices can interweave with certain public investments (like protected cyclist infrastructure, emergency call boxes, and increased lighting) to increase how safe people feel using sustainable transportation.

Participants also noted the role of storytelling in making the perception of transit better. Rebranding traditional modes (e.g., reimagining buses as “circulators”) and storytelling around community benefits can elevate public perception of the safety and comfort of transit—thus building broader support and encouraging greater use.

7. Accessibility and Equity Are Central

In addition to the public safety considerations raised, workshop participants noted that sustainable transportation access is linked to economic opportunity. Effectively engaging low-income residents and prioritizing affordability in TOD investments are crucial to aligning transportation improvements with broader community benefits and development project success.

Incorporating community input into design decisions for TOD and sustainable infrastructure can help reduce barriers for low-income and historically marginalized communities to access housing, walkable areas, and economic development opportunities.

Several individuals at the workshop also emphasized planning for all users, including people with disabilities. In this context, they pointed to recent increases in ridership following targeted bus system redesigns in Miami—underscoring the value of inclusive, data-informed transit planning that can be replicated elsewhere.

Conclusion

The key amenities, project profiles, and workshop takeaways highlighted in this report demonstrate that sustainable transportation is a defining element of successful CRE. In a shifting market where tenants, investors, and residents are demanding that projects increase community well-being in sustainable ways, developers are seeing new opportunities to succeed.

Developers that align their projects with public investments in transit and active transportation are finding ways to reduce costs and emissions, attract tenants, and build lasting value. This report highlights how certain amenities and building features can amplify the impact of public dollars while improving building performance and meeting the growing demand for walkable, climate-resilient communities.

By building in tandem with public sector investments, developers can create successful projects that contribute to broader community well-being in the long term.



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